

Obituaries

Soromini Kallichurum

A South African medical icon and a fearless protector of students during apartheid

Professor Soromini Kallichurum was a role model to a generation of South African students and academics. A pioneering woman, she broke down barriers to succeed in a world that had long been considered a male stronghold and went on to become the first woman and the first non-white person to be appointed dean of the faculty of medicine at the University of Natal. She was also an internationally respected pathologist and an authority on lung diseases in the black population.

Mini, as she was affectionately known, maintained that she had not wanted to study medicine but had been forced to do so by her father. And so in 1950 she became one of the first 12 undergraduates to enrol at the non-white section of the University of Natal. Her classmates claimed that she did not study much. Nevertheless she passed her exams effortlessly, was awarded a doctorate for her research into cor pulmonale arising from lung diseases in the black population, and went on to pursue a career in anatomical pathology.

In the 1970s, disillusioned by academic medicine and a salary structure that discriminated against non-white academic staff, she entered private practice as a specialist pathologist. But in 1978 she was invited to apply for the chair of anatomical pathology at the University of Natal. Despite by now having established a lucrative private practice, she accepted the post, becoming the first non-white medical professor in South Africa. From 1984 to



1986, she was also part time dean of the medical faculty.

The history of the medical school in the apartheid 1980s was one of turmoil. A discontented student body frequently boycotted classes over various grievances, such as discriminatory practices in medicine. Also, the university's governing body had treated the medical school since its inception as a "Cinderella" faculty and the senate and council were not interested in the difficulties that staff and students had to face in working in appalling conditions. Perhaps one of Mini's greatest attributes was her negotiating ability, and she used this to full

effect during this difficult time, liaising with medical students, staff, and the university governing body. She became known for her fearless protection of students when the university authorities or the security services cracked down. Students also nicknamed her "the granite woman" because her approach to problems was at times unemotional.

Mini was an icon in the medical school. She was a strict disciplinarian who demanded high ethical standards, but she was also a role model to all academics, particularly to women, who had to work in an environment that was full of discrimination. She retired as professor of anatomical pathology in 1994.

From 1994 to 1997, she was president of the Interim Medical and Dental Council of South Africa and then, from 1998 to 2002, of the transformed body, the Health Professions Council of South Africa. She was highly motivated in approaching the important task of transforming the previously white oriented South African Medical and Dental Council into a Health Professions Council that is representative of the demography of the country and of all the disciplines of health care.

Predeceased by her husband Karoon Rughubar, she leaves three daughters and her grandchildren. [Y K SEEDAT]

Soromini Kallichurum, former professor of anatomical pathology University of Natal, South Africa (b Ladysmith 1932; q University of Natal 1957; MD), d 21 December 2002.

Rupert Jackson

Locum consultant in emergency medicine Manchester Royal Infirmary (b 1968; q Manchester 1992), died by his own hand on 7 October 2002.

Rupert Jackson was a house officer at Bolton General Hospital. After senior house officer posts at Bolton Royal Infirmary, he was a registrar on the northwest emergency medicine rotation and also undertook 12 months of additional training in intensive care. His areas of special expertise were resuscitation, intensive care, pain relief, and sedation. Rupert loved the

countryside of the north of England and often went walking on the moors with his two dogs. His other interests included classic cars, cooking, and his home and family. He leaves a wife, Sue, and two daughters. [CHRIS MOULTON]

Koloman Kropach

Former general practitioner, London (b Witzniz, Austria, 1912; q Vienna 1937), d 7 November 2002.

Koloman Kropach, known as Karl, left Austria just before Hitler invaded in August



1938, intending to join his brother in Iraq. His adventurous journey took a month. He learnt Arabic and worked for a drug company before he was deported to Palestine in 1941.

British intelligence evacuated him on to a troop ship to a camp where his skills were used treating enteritis, malaria, and meningitis. He joined the Royal Army Medical Corps in 1943 and served for five years in Somalia. He was a registrar at Paddington Hospital, London, before entering general practice. He enjoyed travel and died suddenly on holiday in Tenerife. He leaves a wife, Delia; two children; and six grandchildren. [JEANNE RATHBONE]

Alasdair Burnett Matheson



Consultant in emergency medicine Aberdeen 1977-2000 (b Aberdeen 1940; q Aberdeen 1964; OBE, FRCS Ed, FFAEM), d 13 December 2002.

Alasdair trained in Aberdeen, Newcastle upon Tyne, and Carlisle before taking up his consultant post at Aberdeen. In his early days, in addition to normal clinical duties, he was frequently winched down to the decks of vessels at sea to assess the medical status of crew members. He developed into his role of senior consultant within the unit and he took an active role in major civil accident planning, even before the presence of North Sea oil rigs. Always active in medical politics, he became chairman of the Scottish Committee for Hospital Medical Services, and was a member of various other committees. He leaves a wife, Moira. [LESLIE MOFFAT]

Isobel Jean McLarty



Former senior medical officer Worcester (b 1915; q Edinburgh 1939), died from ovarian cancer on 12 August 2002.

After working in the Sick Children's Hospital in Edinburgh, she was in general practice with her father for several years during the second world war. She then went into public health medicine, which took her

to Newcastle upon Tyne and Sheffield as assistant school medical officer. Her final appointment was as senior medical officer for child health in Worcester. On retirement she returned to Edinburgh, where she worked for the Royal Society for Home Relief to Incurables. She played golf enthusiastically and was a member of several clubs. [G M LOWDON]

Thomas Ariba Ogada



Former dean University of Nairobi faculty of medicine and Kenyan ambassador to United Nations agencies, Geneva (b Kisumu, Kenya, 1936; q Makerere University, Kampala, 1963; FRCP, FRCP Ed), was killed in a car crash in March 2002.

Tom Ogada had a major influence on the development of medical services and education in Kenya. After training in Nairobi and London, he was lecturer, senior lecturer, and later professor of medicine and dean of the faculty of medicine at the University of Nairobi. In 1989 he was appointed ambassador and permanent representative of Kenya and accredited to World Health Organization and United Nations agencies based in Geneva. He then became regional adviser to the World Health Organization at its office in Brazzaville until 1998, when he returned to Kenya. At the time of his death he was medical director of the Aga Khan Hospital in Nairobi. He leaves a wife, Margaret, and five children. [KRISHNA SOMERS]

John Jackson Pollock



Former general practitioner Heckmondwye (b Glasgow 1925; q Glasgow 1948), d 20 November 2002.

Known to friends, colleagues, and patients as Ian Pollock, he was always called Joe by those who went through medical school with him. After serving with the Royal Army

Medical Corps in Malaya, Joe settled into general practice in Yorkshire in 1951. He became a keen golfer, and outside his practice his main interests were golf and his holiday home in Arran. He leaves a wife, Anne, and four children. [ALEXANDER MUNN]

Desmond Smith

Consultant radiologist Salisbury Hospitals 1964-86 (b County Roscommon, Ireland, 1921; q Edinburgh 1947; MRCP, DMRD, FRCR), d 15 October.

After qualifying, Desmond set out to become a physician specialising in chest medicine. But in the late 1950s he decided to become a radiologist, and trained at St Thomas's Hospital, London. He had a beautiful garden, which was opened annually to the public. He was also a first class tennis and squash player and went on playing vigorously into old age. After retirement from Salisbury Hospitals, Desmond continued to do sessional work in various hospitals in the region for a further five years. He leaves a wife and two stepdaughters. [P M S GILLAM]

Mary Marguerite ("Peggy") Szekely (née Lynch)



Former public health doctor Newcastle upon Tyne (b Cork 1916; q Cork 1939; DRCOG, DPH), d 6 October 2002.

Peggy worked in Mexborough during the Blitz, moving to Newcastle General Hospital to work in obstetrics. It was there that she met her future husband, cardiologist Paul Szekely (obituary *BMJ* 1986; 292:67), who had escaped from France when the Nazis invaded, taking the last boat out of Bordeaux. She moved to south London, and worked in Battersea and Croydon, during which time she married. Returning to Newcastle at the end of the war, she did child welfare clinics until her retirement in 1981. She moved to the west of Ireland 15 years after her husband's death to live with her sister. [IRENE MURRAY]

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